

8516 West Howell Road
Bethesda, MD 20817

March 15, 1999

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Commissioner Jane E. Henney, M.D.
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857

Dear Commissioner Jane E. Henney:

I strongly support your decision to use irradiation on our food. I would feel a lot more comfortable knowing that it was impossible to buy meat that had been contaminated with E-coli. It would relieve the worry and stress not just for me, but for everyone. This is only one of the reasons that I support your decision and want you to continue irradiating food. Let's consider some other reasons.

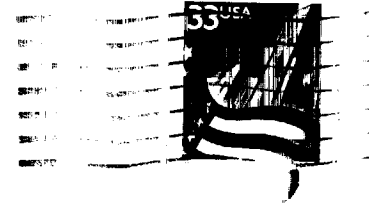
Countryside and Small Stock Journal said that irradiation kills 99.99% of all bacteria that can cause harm when consumed by living things. For example, your favorite uncle may come over to your house one day for a barbecue. You know he likes his steak rare, so you get one out of the fridge that has been there since last weekend's barbecue. You cook it until it just turns brown. Your uncle enjoys his meal and continues to socialize with the family, not knowing that the steak might be contaminated. After a few hours, he becomes very ill. Wouldn't it have been better if that steak had been irradiated? Of course! Then your uncle would never have gotten so sick, risking death, and you wouldn't have to feel so guilty. Another example of the hazard of not irradiating food probably happens all the time. You're in the kitchen making a delicious chicken dish, but you never realize that the chicken has been contaminated with salmonella. You cut up the chicken, and put it in the oven. Then you decide to make a salad to go along with your meal. You take out your lettuce, tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, etc. and start cutting up the vegetables for the salad. You eat this wonderful meal, and the next day you start throwing up. Since it doesn't stop, you go to the doctor and find out you've got salmonella poisoning. Your family is worried and you are shocked! You remembered to cook the chicken well, wash the vegetables, wash your hands, andoh, my goodness, you forgot to wash the cutting board before you cut up the veggies! Again, if that chicken had been irradiated, there would not have been a problem.

The same journal says that one third of food becomes spoiled and is then thrown away! If this food were irradiated, it would not spoil so quickly and more people could be fed. Just think, it could be the end of starvation in much of the world. Besides, the journal also reports that irradiated crops produce higher yields. For example, irradiated grapes produce more juice, irradiated wheat gives a larger loaf of bread, irradiated dried beans cook in less time, and irradiated meat is more tender. Not only could more people eat, it would encourage people to eat healthier. If beans cooked faster, more people might make them and we all know that beans are a good protein that is low in cholesterol and high in

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